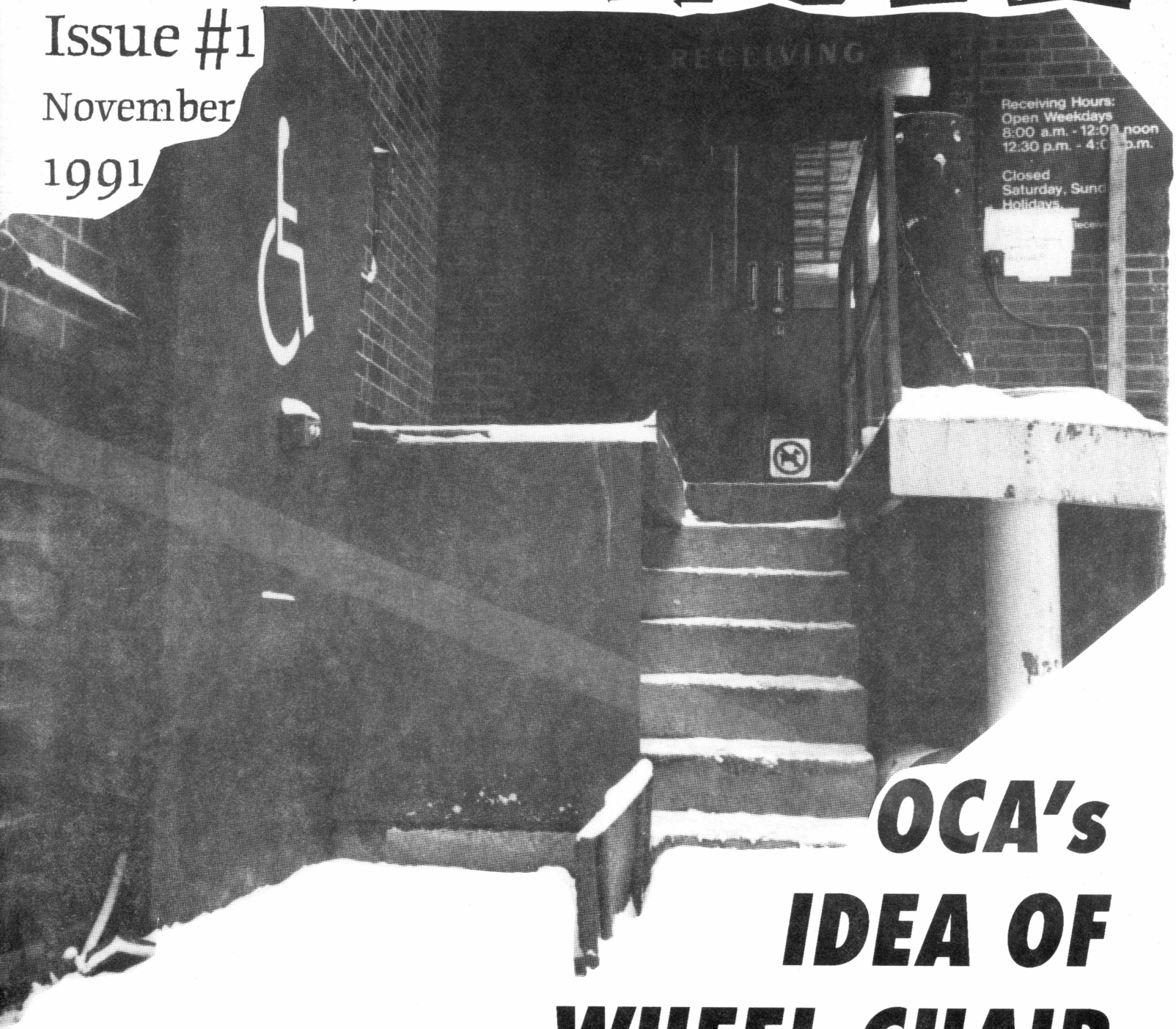
first BITE

Issue #1
November
1991



OCA's IDEA OF WHEEL-CHAIR ACCESSIBLE?

Dear Mr. Porteous, President

Further to our recent meetings, I wish to clarify to you my position regarding wheelchair accessibility at OCA.

Accessibility to the school, and specific areas within the school is both inappropriate and inadequate.

Primarily my concern is with the lift which is installed at the rear of 100 McCaul Street. The user is required to use the lift. the current change in policy is not only time consuming and very inappropriate in rain or snow but is also a cause for concern about the safety of the lift if the service of an attendant is now deemed necessary. Also of concern is the lack of any indication on the lift regarding where or by whom it was manufactured, and by whose authority it is being used as an elevating device.

As a result of this problem I have had to miss time from many of my classes not only because of actual time waiting for an attendant, but because I have had to take time intended as breaks and lunch periods in order to meet with anyone and everyone who might be involved waiting for protracted periods which have cut into class time. I miss out on proper meals, and because the cafeteria is one of the areas inaccessible to me I already have the problem of carrying my lunch with me.

I have spoken in this regard to Cynthia Richardson, Pam King, Ted Rickard, Michael Harmes, Colette Whiten, Peter Mah, Anne Papmehl, Nicky Davis, Josephine Polera, Anne Graham, all of my teachers at 100 McCaul, and yourself.

As an immediate solution to the lift problem I want to have a temporary ramp installed (by October 21, 1991) to permit access to the main building at 100 McCaul Street and a construction deadline for permanent and appropriate access.

I want definite arrangements to be made to have other areas of the school i.e. cafeteria, auditorium, atrium and student lounge made accessible to me by January 1, 1992 and permanently wheelchair accessible by September 21, 1992.

I applied to school in good faith. In my previous school experience I have never encountered so many stumbling blocks and I am most distressed that despite the best efforts of the Special Needs Co-ordinator and other sympathetic staff I have had to go bat on my own behalf. This is not my function. My function is to concentrate on my education, to be a student. Please allow me the same right to do this as is accorded to other students.

Yours in good faith,

Spirit

c.c. Colette Whiten, Senior Advisor
Pam King, Director of Health Services
Ted Rickard,, Health and Safety Officer
Cynthia Richardson, Special Needs Co-ordinator
Catherine Beaudette, Fine Art Faculty
Joan Bobbs, Applied Arts Faculty
Tom Dean, Experimental Arts Faculty
John Gould, Fine Art Faculty
Robert Houle, Liberal Arts Faculty
Michele White, Fine Art Faculty
Jeanette Body, Student Union President
Tom Kowall, Registrar (Please put in my student file)
Anita Dahlin, Head of Systemic Discrimination Unit, Human Rights Commission
T. Gordon Smith, Director, Elevating Devices Branch,
Iler, Camble and Associates
BITE, Student Publication of the Ontario College of Art